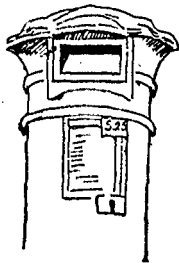


Letters to the Editor.

NOTES, QUERIES, &c.



Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not IN ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

SELF-GOVERNMENT, GOOD GOVERNMENT.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—I am sure the whole of the thinking portion of the nursing profession is grateful to Dr. Bezly Thorne for the clear and decided expression of his policy, to which he gave utterance at the meeting of the R.B.N.A. on Wednesday, the 7th inst. Now we know what to expect, and can work accordingly. Happily for us Dr. Bezly Thorne's attitude is not that of the medical profession as a whole, for they know perfectly well that without the highly-trained nurses much of their work would be handicapped, and their successes in surgery especially would be considerably reduced. Knowing this all those who have the real welfare of their patients at heart are giving every possible assistance to enable nurses to obtain State Registration and self-government.

There was one other point in Dr. Bezly Thorne's speech which you have not yet commented upon, "That nurses would not hold the position they do to-day but for medical men." I consider this a deliberate insult to that splendid body of pioneer nurses from Miss Nightingale onward.

What medical man left his comfortable home to live among the lowest class of women, to work fourteen and sixteen hours a day, every day, Sundays and Bank Holidays included, for fifty weeks out of fifty-two, so that the sick should be better nursed, and that nurses and nursing should be raised to a higher level? Is it possible that Miss Nightingale, Agnes Jones, and Sister Dora were really medical men passing as women and nurses? We know they were not. Nursing is, and always has been, women's work, and women alone have made nursing what it is to-day, let a thousand Dr. Bezly Thorne's say what they will to the contrary.

If any one wants to know what nursing (?) is under the supreme dominance of the male sex, let them cross the Channel and visit the hospitals in Paris, as I did only two or three years ago, and they will find discipline and nursing, as we understand it, are conspicuous by their absence; they would then realise the noble work women have done in English hospitals, and would, if they had any sense of truth and justice, give honour where honour is due.

Medical men are, as a class, splendid at their own work, but they are not nurses, and therefore they cannot, and do not, understand nurses' needs or the conditions under which they work.

In the sick room the medical man will always be supreme, and any nurse arrogating to herself his duties would be quickly made to feel the effect of the

disciplinary clauses if our Bill (*i.e.*, that of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses) becomes law.

But outside the sick room nurses have the right to their own opinions and to power by which to maintain professional discipline. Miss Nightingale laid down the fundamental law that a trained woman should have "authority and discipline" in the nursing departments of our hospitals, and only trained women can maintain discipline throughout the whole profession of nursing.

Dr. Thorne and his colleagues have tried to control nurses through the Royal British Nurses' Association, and no one can deny that their attempts have been a dismal failure, and have brought the greatest discredit upon the Association. Therefore, let us have self-government, justice, and good order, which can all be attained, if the just Bill drafted by the Society for the State Registration of Nurses becomes law.

I am, yours faithfully,
The Chestnuts, Ebford, MARY BURR.
Topsham, S. Devon,

UNITY IS STRENGTH.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—Will you allow me through the medium of the Journal to draw the attention of nurses to the necessity for unity, not only of action to obtain proper recognition by the State, which just now is engaging the time and energy of some of the most thoughtful of our ranks—their motive being the raising of the standard of nursing to its proper level—work for which they get little thanks, either from nurses as a body or the public, but the effect of which will as time goes on be very far-reaching. Unity is also necessary to check the sad occurrences which we are from time to time made aware of. Just now in the one instance of a nurse taking her life through lack of work, the other of a woman (nurse?) committed to the Assizes for having in her possession the valuable ring of one whose dying hours she was called in to attend, an act of grave indiscretion if she accepted it as a gift from one *in extremis*; of more than that, if she betrayed the confidence placed in her. Again, as the annual reports of hospitals are published we read that at one provincial hospital the sum of £420, the earnings of the private nursing staff, has been added to the general fund, though the nurses are not recognised as subscribers. What consolation will those nurses get when, after having given their best years to the Institution and through it to the public, they find themselves in a fireless attic with a pension of 5s. a week. The speeches of Mr. Sidney Holland and Sir Henry Burdett will be of little comfort. Had the poor thing who took her life joined the League of her school she might have been helped, and we see the need for State Registration so that trained nurses shall not starve whilst those with a month's monthly training are given all kinds of cases by medical men, and the patients pay for, and are under the impression that they are employing, a trained nurse.

Whilst thanking Dr. Bezly Thorne for his statement of the attitude of the medical members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, one must

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